Agni

Song of the Spinster
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Song of the Spinster

Last night, they came again, not the dead but the living
tugging at the sleeve of my old tweed coat.

One held out a luminous clock. Another, a knife he was willing
to slit his throat with.

My mother, grunting and singing, dragged in her vacuum cleaner;
my sisters, their favorite sweaters.

Every night a jostling crowd hurries to open the kitchen door
as I stumble in with my groceries,

the eggs already broken in their carton, the milk
spilling on the linoleum like a lake I need to step over,

and every night, I turn from the chopping block
where I have set the bags down, to face them with my practiced

patient look. And all the doors lock.
Last night, a car pulled up to my curb and parked.

A man wanted only one word with me.
Behind him, my brother was chaining his bike to a parking meter

about to look up, wearing his winning smile.
My hands have never felt so ineffectual as in the night

when the dreams unreel and they crush in, plaintive, polite,
the already forgiven

and I toss like a branch in a storm of sheets, wearing my kneesocks,
sleeping alone, my arms, I insist, outstretched to no one.

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